

Green is the new black

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Isn't it great that sustainability has now become a mainstream issue within society? Could you even imagine environmental policy being at the forefront of an election campaign in 2000? For schools, the often-overlooked bi-product of being 'green' relates to the amount of money that can be saved through basic awareness of the resources they're using—and how careful use can help them stay in the black.

In Australian schools, Information Communications Technologies (ICT) usage is reaching a point where average sized schools are managing as much hardware as reasonably sized businesses in the corporate world. This means that schools need to exercise as much diligence as possible to ensure they're running a tight (and energy efficient) ship.

To help schools stay in the black, I've included five simple tips that schools can follow to save cost, minimise wastage and reduce energy usage.

1 – Turn your computers into sleepy heads!

Make sure your school has a system where all PCs/laptops switch to power saving mode during periods of inactivity. Windows 7 makes it easier to manage on a school-wide basis. Annual energy savings of \$20 per PC add up to \$10,000 per year when you have 500 PCs!

Comment: This is easy to implement and the savings are well worth it. They'll appreciate the rest too.

2 – Green really is the new black!

In 2007, a blogger proclaimed that Google could save 750,000 kilowatt-hours a year if the homepage was changed from white to black. This is because standard LCD and CRT screens use less power when displaying black backgrounds. Following on from point 1, a solid green policy within your school would ensure that colourful screensavers are shelved in favour of black, hibernated screens.

Comment: Although this is a small saving, every amount counts.

3 – Digitise where possible!

The traditional way of distributing class materials and internal communications has always been by using a photocopier. It has often been used to print

out daily notices, memos, messages and classroom handouts. With the accessibility of technology, schools can realise huge savings by changing practices and communicating digitally where possible. For example, a small school used the web to deliver internal communications and it saved them 8,000 pieces of paper throughout one year! This amounted to a reduction of 95kg in carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions, 2560L in water consumption, and one less tree felling—plus reduced printing expenses.

Comment: In 2010, this is type of saving should be readily valued and easily implemented.

4 – If you must...

If the only feasible option is to print, make sure your school has a photocopier that allows double-sided printing. Most major providers offer this feature. However, using recycled paper through your photocopier is not advocated because this could affect your school's warranty service agreement.

Comment: Being 'green' still means thoughtful policy and logical practice. Don't go overboard!

5 – Use laptops instead of PCs

It's clear that a major factor to consider in the laptop or PC war is the former's superior mobility. However, a point rarely raised in this fight is the fact that laptops use significantly less energy than most desktops. Studies have found that, on average, laptops use 50% less kWh/year than PCs. If a school chooses 500 laptops, the annual savings can be significant.

Comment: Smaller is better!

In terms of simple-to-adopt strategies, these five measures are some of the best examples of procedures to follow

However, there are more complex strategies that schools are undertaking by utilising current best practice in ICT. This includes strategies such as 'virtualising' their servers, outsourcing their data storage and using virtual desktops.

In summary, it's clear that schools can save wastage and costs by following simple steps. The key principle to energy conservation is making incremental improvements over sustained periods of time. It's obviously a team game and everyone needs to be aware and involved. **TEACH**